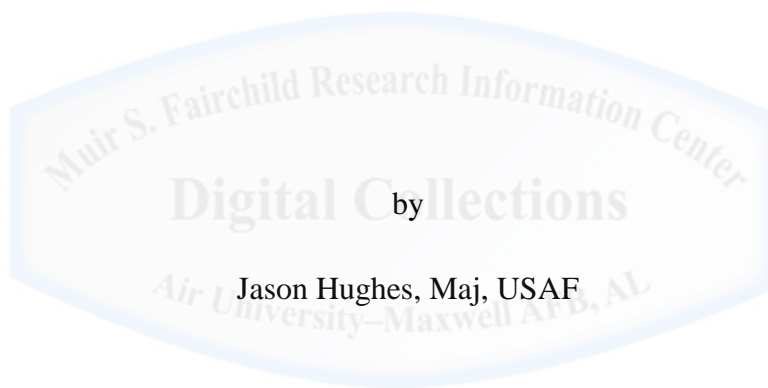


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AIR COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE

AIR UNIVERSITY

DOES THE ISRAELI SECURITY FENCE ACTUALLY INCREASE SECURITY?



Submitted to the Faculty of Air Command and Staff College

Advisors: Lt Col Kris Bauman, PhD, Dr. Robert DiPrizio

Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama

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Preface

This paper focuses specifically on the implications of the security fence, or the annexation wall, built between Israel and the occupied territory of the West Bank. It is by no means the only, or even the most important, topic in the greater issue of the Arab-Israeli conflict, but to many it is the most recognizable. Similar to the Berlin Wall, the security fence has come to represent to many the divide between the people of the West Bank and Israel, as it did with me.

The peace process does not hinge on the wall, but the wall is certainly a part of it. My goal in undertaking this research project was to develop and communicate an understanding of the real implications this wall will have on the eventual outcome of the conflict.

Much of the data, and indeed most of the sources I came across, are biased in this issue to one side or the other, and I think you will find that apparent when reading this report. I have attempted, and I ask of you as well, to use corroborating evidence from both perspectives, when available, and come to a conclusion based on objective data—if such a thing even truly exists. There are undoubtedly errors of omission in the data, but hopefully these voids are small enough not to detract from the overall picture. The Arab-Israeli conflict is one that defines the Middle East, and understanding this relatively new concrete embodiment of the conflict hopefully helps to formulate a process that can eventually lead to peace among the cultures.

Abstract

The title of this paper adequately phrases the problem it set out to solve—does the Israeli security fence actually provide security? Answering this question first required providing a brief history lesson as to why the fence was built. Beyond the history of the region, the physical characteristics of the fence are detailed, which is necessary to understand why the fence successfully thwarts attacks while simultaneously culturally oppresses a people. The route the fence takes is absolutely critical to comprehending the real value of the fence to the Israeli state—improving demographic security. The route, too, defines a key grievance of the Palestinians that is has physically isolated them from their way of life including family, friends, schools, hospitals, and even their livelihoods. The next, most obvious, area for research was physical security—did the fence reduce terrorist attacks originating from the east side of the security barrier? By analyzing the numbers, it is apparent that the wall did, in fact, reduce the number of successful attacks. Finally, its economic impact to the West Bank of skyrocketing unemployment and drastic reduction in per capita GDP increases Palestinian hardship so much that it might make a peace agreement appealing, in an awfully oppressive manner.

DOES THE ISRAELI SECURITY FENCE ACTUALLY INCREASE SECURITY?

The security barrier won't be dismantled. I hear people saying that since there is quiet, the fence can be torn down. My friends, the opposite is true. Because we have the fence, there is quiet.

— Binyamin Netanyahu¹

Introduction

On the night of August 13, 2002, the landscape of the Middle East changed². The wall separating the West Bank from the rest of Israel was going up, and life on both sides would be affected. Separation barriers are nothing new, and the history of the “security fence,” as Israel calls it, is important to understanding its reason for existence and the objectives the builders were trying to achieve. Beyond the history of the fence, the construction of the fence—both its composition and route—are vitally important to paint an adequate picture of the true barrier. However, the impact of this fence can only be measured after its implementation, and it must be measured in respect to its goals. Finally, understanding the unintended (or at least uncommunicated) consequences of the physical barrier will provide an accurate understanding of the topic as a whole.

Only after understanding the history, construction, success, and ramifications of the Israeli security fence is it possible to realize that the fence does provide security to the nation of Israel. This security, though, is not simply security from physical attacks. Contrarily, the most important security the fence provides Israel is demographic security—vital to a Jewish state in an

Arab region. This security comes at a price, and the price is primarily paid by the population isolated on the east side of it—the Palestinians. The cultural and economic impact the fence has had on the people of the West Bank is enormous—and precisely the reason it could actually further peace negotiations.

Therefore, this paper will break down the topic to discuss all of these sections in depth before explaining the conclusion that the security fence does provide security to Israel. These sections include history, construction, security implications, and cultural and economic impact.



History

The Middle East has a fascinating history blessed with culture, mixed with ethnicities, embellished with successes, fraught with disaster, and wrapped in change. The borders of the region have been drawn and redrawn across millennia from the dawn of civilization in 3500 BC to the Persian Empire, the Byzantine Empire to the Ottoman Empire, and finally to the European domination and partitioning.³ The history of the lands of the Middle East is dynamic, and none more so than that of the land that became Israel. As the only country to be created by the United Nations, Israel has a unique and storied past.⁴

What is the wall separating?

The history of the fence can only be understood within the broader history of the region; specifically the recent history of the border along which it was built. The state of Israel came into existence in 1948 in a strip of land on the east coast of the Mediterranean Sea in a part of what was known as Palestine. During the period leading up to Israel's



Figure 1. Map of Israel

declaration of statehood, and for a period thereafter, the resident occupants of the land were displaced. These inhabitants, Palestinians as they came to be known, left, or in many cases were forcibly removed, from Israel. These refugees spread across the Middle East, many of them settling along the west bank of the Jordan River.

For the first 19 years of the state, the borders of Israel did not encompass a large sect of land on the west side of the Jordan River, which is now known as the West Bank. It wasn't until the Six Day War in 1967 that Israel occupied the West Bank and subjugated its inhabitants to Israeli control. Israel claims many reasons for this annexation: biblical prophecy, historical right, national security . . . , but that is not the topic of this paper. It is merely important to understand that the West Bank is not a part of Israel, but Israel controls it (to the extent it wishes) by force. Again, whether this is right or wrong, justified or not, is not the discussion. The current status of the land, not the reason, is critically important to the building of the "annexation wall."

Why is a barrier necessary?

The Israeli occupation of the West Bank has not been a bloodless one. As a nationalist identity began to solidify among the Palestinians, they became more and more opposed to Israeli control. Throughout the 40+ years of Israeli occupation, this opposition has taken various forms. Violence, though, is the stated reason Israel built the security fence between them and the West Bank.

The Palestinians are a much weaker force than Israel, whose military is the most powerful in the region. Therefore, in order to advance their political goals, the Palestinians in large part have relied on a type of revolutionary warfare, or insurgency, to counter Israel's occupation and advance their secessionist goals. Because of the atypical weakness of Palestinian military force, a common tactic they employ is terrorism. Terrorism is a tactic of using violence to invoke

terror in a populous, thereby enticing the populous to support a political position as the only way to effectively counter the violence that terrorizes them.⁵ Although Palestinians are not the only ones to use terrorism (a very good argument can be made that Israel both used and still uses this tactic), some factions within Palestine resort almost exclusively to it as their preferred method of action.

Combating an insurgency is very difficult, and terrorism is an even more difficult tactic to counter. A terrorist movement enjoys the luxury to decide where and when to strike, can pursue its goals very cheaply relative to the target government, has time on its side, and enjoys almost a monopoly on propaganda.⁶ To counter terrorism, you must understand the potent advantages the terrorist enjoys. When you further complicate the problem with suicide terrorism, prevention becomes nearly impossible. Thus, the Palestinian attacks on Israel were successful in large numbers, and the Israeli government was pressured by the population to do something to curb the attacks.

On September 28, 2000, Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon visited the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif, the third most holy place in Islam, with a contingent of armed guards.⁷ This visit sparked a massive popular uprising in the West Bank known as the second intifada. The violence of the second intifada peaked on the night of March 27, 2002 (Passover-eve) when a suicide attack killed 30 people, launching the total number of Israelis killed that month to 130.⁸

In response to the terrorist attacks in 2002, the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) launched Operation Defensive Shield—a massive incursion into the West Bank to “restore security.” Sharon, hinting at the ferocity of the operation to come, told the cabinet “The Palestinians must be hit, and it must be very painful,” he said. “We must cause them losses, victims, so that they feel a heavy price.”⁹ In addition to the offensive military operation, Sharon “reluctantly gave in

to mounting public pressure and brought the plans for the security barrier to the cabinet table for approval . . .”¹⁰

As the Israeli government searched for an answer to the indiscriminate killings of its people, it looked to what successes they had seen in the past. They did not need to look very far. Terrorist attacks from the Gaza Strip (another territory occupied by the Israelis after the Six Day War in 1967) were largely unsuccessful. The Israelis attributed this largely to the security fence surrounding the Strip.

The Israelis first built a fence along the Green Line (Internationally recognized border) around Gaza in 1994 following the peace accords, attempting to reign in the extremists who were trying to subvert the peace process through terror attacks.¹¹ When this fence was only partially successful, they updated the fence to a high-tech barrier early during the second intifada. This fence consisted of sophisticated sensors, razor wire, a security buffer zone, and ditches.¹² This barrier was highly successful in deterring attacks originating within the Gaza Strip. According to Neil Lochery in his book *The View From the Fence*, after the fence was in place, terrorist “Operations mounted by such cells [based in the Gaza Strip] usually took the form of suicide bomb attacks on crossing points and risked killing as many Palestinians as Israelis.”¹³ General Uzi Dayan, then presiding over the National Security Council, furthered the argument: “Look, what happened in Gaza should be enough to convince you that a barrier was the solution. In five years, not one group of terrorists was able to infiltrate Israel from the Gaza Strip.”¹⁴ The success of this barrier would play directly into the handling of the problem along the border of the West Bank.

According to the Israeli Ministry of Defense, “The operational concept underlining the Security Fence project is to provide a response to the threats posed to the State of Israel and

protect its population from the threat of terror and criminal activity.”¹⁵ The fence, therefore, is designed to stop attacks on Israel from within the West Bank, just as the barrier had done with the Gaza Strip.



Construction

It may seem that the physical construction of the separation fence is unimportant to its overall effect in the region, but nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, the construction of the barrier defines many of the issues surrounding the project. What the fence is made of often determines how much land it requires—almost all of which is annexed from the West Bank. Realizing how the barrier is constructed sheds light on what the Israelis do with obstacles in the path—land, orchards, farms, even houses. Finally, where the barrier is constructed, the route the barrier takes as it winds through the land, is critical to explaining one of the primary grievances voiced by the Palestinians—why is the fence nearly twice as long as the border? Therefore, understanding what, where, and how the fence is constructed is critical to understanding the far reaching implications, intended or not, the fence is responsible for instigating.

What does the barrier look like?

The barrier itself varies along its projected 709 km course, mostly made up of wire fence.¹⁶ Approximately five or six percent of the wall will be made of solid concrete slabs.¹⁷ The wall that most often comes to mind is the giant (23-30 feet tall) wall made of adjoining concrete panels that dot the urban landscape.¹⁸ Most of the security fence does not look like this, but the function remains essentially the same. The primary difference is the width of the fence—in rural areas, where land is less of an issue, the wire fence runs between 135 and 300 feet wide, including a series of barbed wire zones, ditches, anti-detection pathways, and patrol roads (see

figure 2).¹⁹²⁰

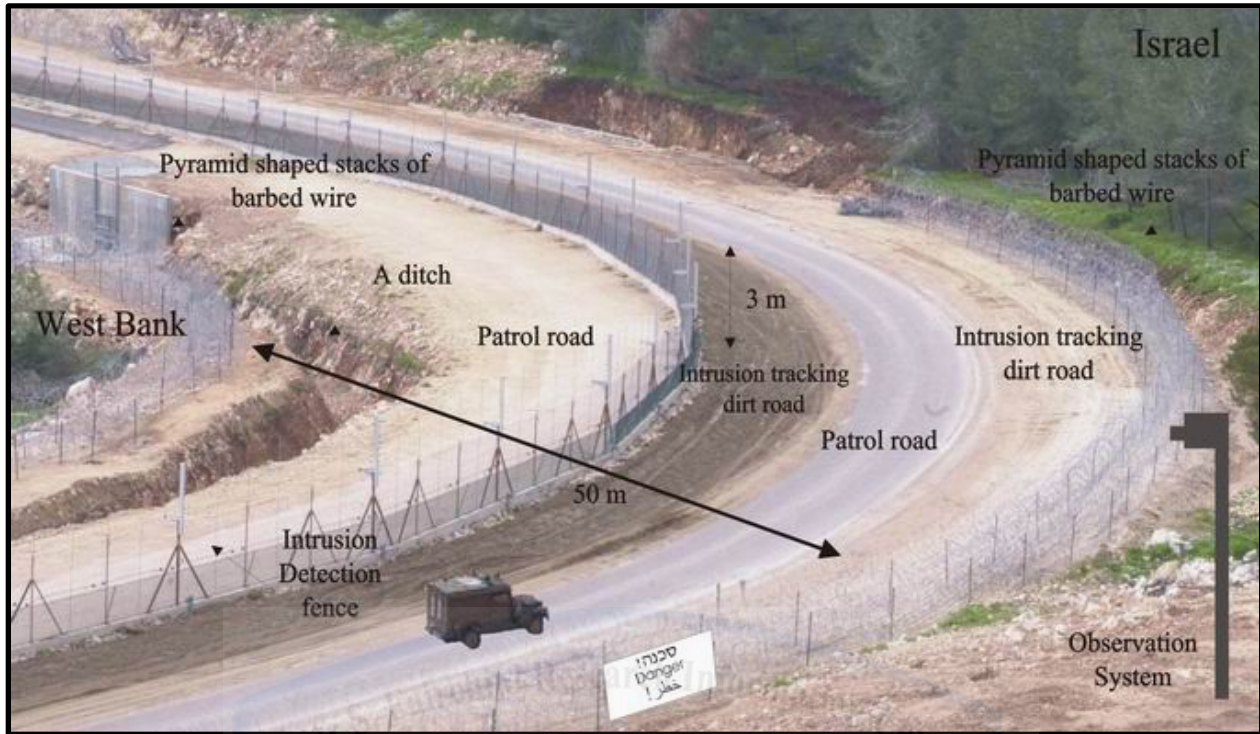


Figure 2. Virtual depiction of the security fence.

When the fence changes to a wall, it is constructed of concrete slabs about sixteen inches thick and 23-30 feet tall (see figures 3 and 4).²¹²²



Figure 3 (left). Picture of the separation fence as it becomes a wall in Qalqilya, West Bank.



Figure 4 (right). View of Bethlehem on the West Bank side of the wall.

Colonel Dany Tirza, who may be the inventor of the wall, explains another reason for the concrete slabs. Although Tirza is part of the reserve forces, he remains in charge of “strategic and spatial planning” at the Ministry of Defense. The military forces consider him to be one of the top experts on the West Bank.²³ Tirza is such a well-known figure that Yasser Arafat once gave him the name “Abu Karita,” or father of maps.²⁴ During an interview with Rene Backmann, author of *A Wall in Palestine*, Tirza points to a section of the wall at the southern edge of Gilo, across from the Palestinian village of Beit Jala. “Here’s where it might have all begun. At the beginning of the Second Intifada, in October 2002, this area was under attack by snipers. They were taking potshots at people in the street from their apartment windows.” To stop the Palestinian snipers, a 6-foot high wall was built across 60 feet of ground. According to Tirza, “The wall worked. The shooting stopped, and people were able to live normally again.”²⁵ Tirza’s successful wall in Gilo was, in effect, the model for the concrete portions of the separation barrier. A depiction of the current wall, much taller than Tirza’s, is shown below in figure 5.²⁶

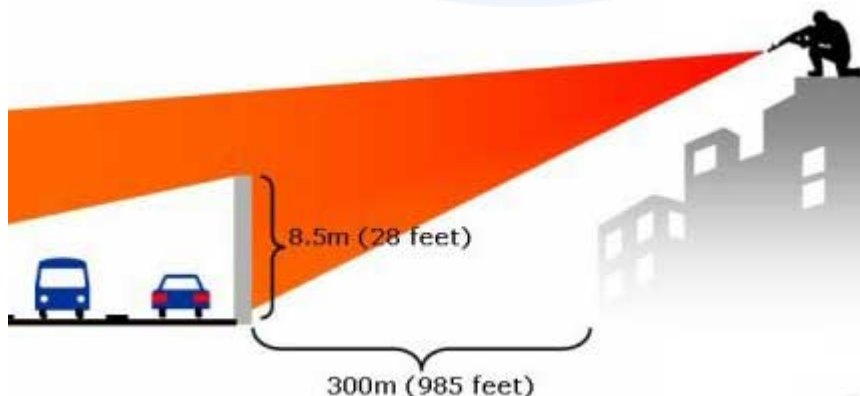


Figure 5. Depiction of urban concrete portions of wall countering sniper fire.

Where is the barrier placed?

One of the most controversial aspects of the barrier is the route it takes as it snakes

through the Middle East (see figure 6).²⁷ The barrier does not follow the 1949 Armistice Line, more commonly known as the Green Line, which is the internationally recognized border between Israel and the West Bank.

Instead, it curves around villages and settlements creating “fingers” that sometimes extend for miles beyond the Green Line. The gap created between the separation barrier and the Green Line is

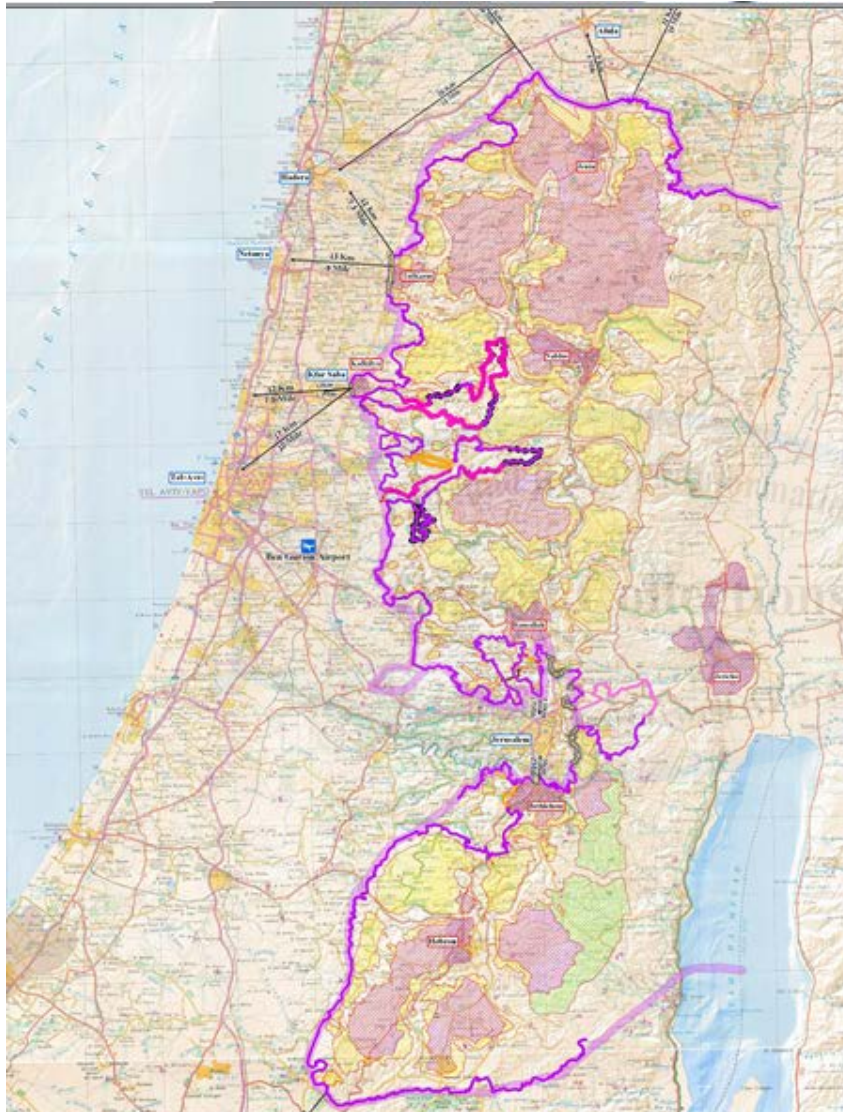


Figure 6. Route of the Separation Fence.

referred to as the “seam zone.”²⁸ Beyond the wall itself, this seam zone has created hardships on the residents of the villages closest to the barrier.

The security fence twists and winds its way through the West Bank to include as many Jewish settlements as possible on the west side while keeping the Palestinian villages on the east. General Dayan explained that his second priority while conducting a study of the soon to be built barrier, behind the first of providing Israel with the best security possible, was to include the greatest number of Israelis and the least number of Palestinians on the west side of the barrier.²⁹ As this routing was realized, large sects of land once belonging to the West Bank were placed out of reach of the Palestinians—beyond the wall. This impacted farmers who could no longer access their farmland, patients that couldn't reach their doctors, and even children that couldn't get to their school. According to B'Tselem's statistics regarding the separation barrier, 479,881 dunams, or 8.5% of the total area of the West Bank, was “annexed” by isolating it on the west side of the wall.³⁰

What about the existing structures in its path?

Much of the ire the wall has provoked is in reaction to the seemingly indiscriminate practice of annexing (and then destroying) land, farms, and even houses that lay in the path of the security fence. Although the Israelis claim that fair compensation for the land is offered, it is difficult to fully compensate someone for demolishing their house, farm, or business.



Figure 7. February 4, 2004 - Children standing on the rubble of their home which was demolished to build the Separation Barrier in Jerusalem. Photo credit: Yehezkel Lein, B'Tselem

For instance, when initially constructing the barrier along the northwestern border of the West Bank, the IDF made a quite an impact. According to an update to the Humanitarian and Emergency Policy Group in March of 2004, “In preparation of the new route of the Barrier in Nazlat Isa, the IDF demolished more than 120 shops during August 2003. A second demolition of 82 shops was completed by the IDF in January 2003. Storeowners were given as little as 30 minutes to evacuate their premises before the demolitions started.”³¹ As just one example, the method of construction certainly plays a role in the Palestinian view of the barrier.



Security

The Israelis continually assert that the security fence was constructed for one reason only—to provide security to Israeli citizens. The effectiveness of the barrier in providing this security is astounding. However, physical security is only one part of the security the fence provides. Demographic security, probably the more important security aspect for the state of Israel, is the primary benefit of the security fence.

What are the objectives of the fence?

In order to analyze the effectiveness of the separation barrier, it is first necessary to understand the goals the Israelis were attempting to reach by building the fence. These goals, defined as principles of the operational concept by the Israeli Ministry of Defense, are as follows:

- Prevention of terror and weapons emanating from Judea and Samaria [biblical term for the West Bank] into Israel.
- Prevention and thwarting of uncontrolled passage of pedestrians, cars and cargo from Judea and Samaria into Israel.
- Minimizing transfer of weapons from Israel to the areas controlled by the Palestinian Authority.
- Prevention of effective shooting against Israeli population and vital infrastructure installations.
- Law enforcement.³²

Alongside the five stated objectives, ulterior motives promoted building the wall. One of these is demographic separation and another is encouraging “voluntary transfer,” a term

Professor Arnon Sofer of Haifa University uses to define the phenomena of Palestinians willingly moving away from the West Bank.³³ Further, placing a visible line in the sand helps to enforce the idea of a permanent border between two states. Therefore, evaluating the accomplishment of each of these objectives will provide the clearest picture possible to use when determining if the fence meets its objectives.

Does the fence meet the objectives?

The primary stated objective of the security fence is to prevent terror attacks originating inside the West Bank. Although it does not completely prevent them, the data available from all sources is overwhelmingly conclusive: the security barrier does drastically reduce terrorist attacks. Looking at the graph below from the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it is clear that since the construction of the security fence began in 2002, suicide terror attacks have decreased significantly.³⁴

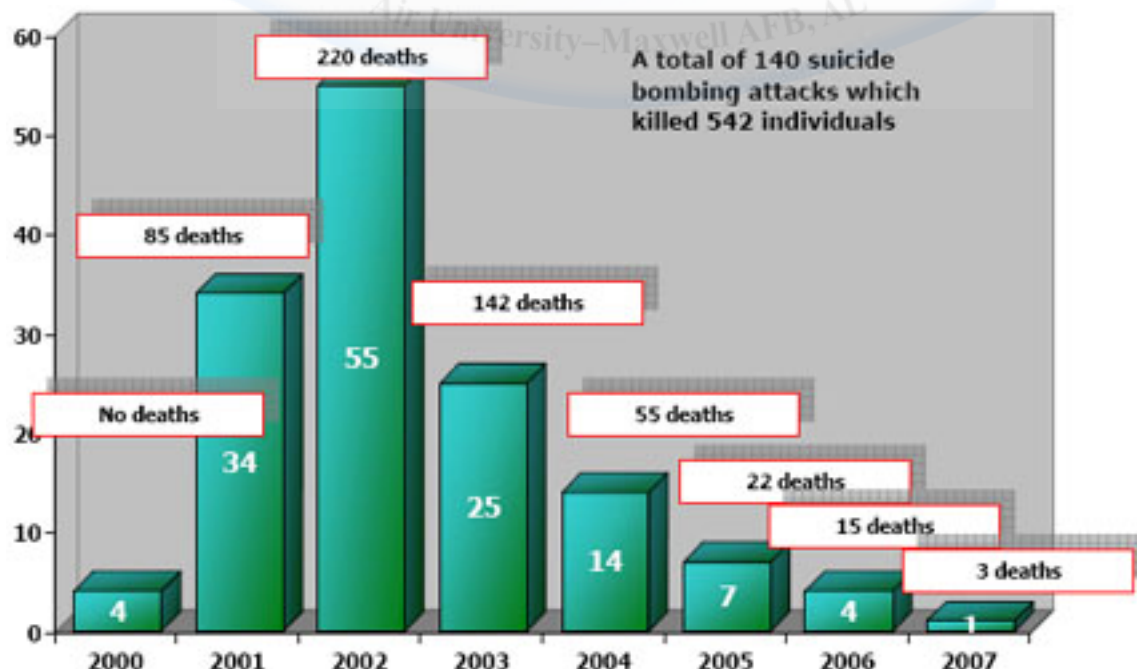


Figure 8. Graphical depiction of suicide attacks and Israeli deaths sorted by year.

David Makovsky, in his article “A Defensible Fence: Fighting Terror and Enabling a Two-State Solution,” cites the Israeli Defense Force figure of 280 successful penetrations by terrorists from the West Bank into Israel in the first three years of the second intifada (2000-2003).³⁵ By contrast, the same author quotes the head of the Israeli Security Agency (Shin Bet) Avi Dichter stating that *no* successful attacks had originated from Tulkarem or Qalqiliya in the first six months of the fence’s existence.³⁶ Beyond successful attacks, Israeli defense minister Shaul Mofaz said that attempted infiltrations had dropped to one-twentieth of pre-wall numbers.³⁷

The numbers from all sources go on to support similar conclusions. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is quoted in the Independent Media Review Analysis article “Summary of State of Israel’s Response regarding the Security Fence” stating that 84% less Israelis were killed in the year of 2003 (August to August) than in 10 months between September 2001 to July 2002 (see figure 9³⁸).³⁹

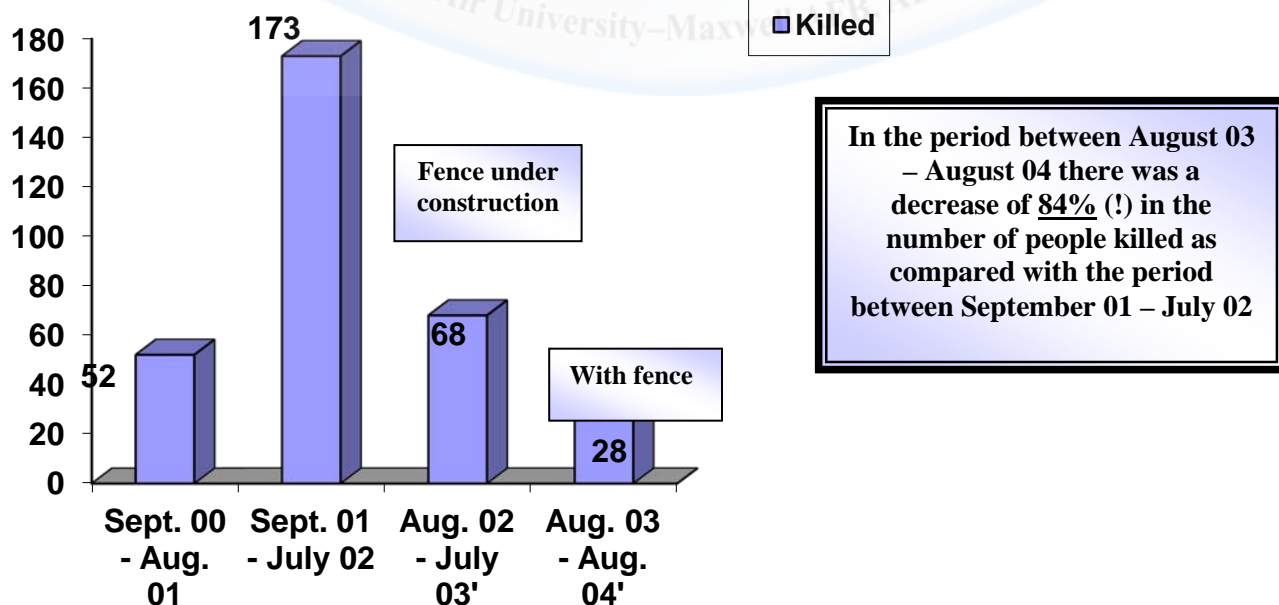


Figure 9. Number of people killed before, during, and after immediate construction of security fence.

Israeli sources are not the only ones that confirm the effectiveness of the security fence against terrorist attacks. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Special Focus on the occupied Palestinian territory wrote, in an article published in August of 2007, that “The number of Israeli civilians killed, from attacks by Palestinian armed groups or individuals, has declined steadily, peaking in 2002 at an average of 22 deaths per month, and dropping markedly to an average of one civilian per month in 2007.”⁴⁰

The statistics are clear: the security fence does indeed meet the stated objectives. There is no doubt that the barrier very nearly prevents terror and weapons emanating from the West Bank into Israel, the first of the stated objectives. Additionally, there can be no doubt that the second objective is also fulfilled by the security fence—the prevention and thwarting of uncontrolled passage of pedestrians, cars and cargo from the West Bank into Israel. According to B’Tselem, as of July 2009, there were 73 checkpoints and gates along the barrier.⁴¹ The control the security fences and the associated checkpoints afford the Israelis ensures the completion of this objective; as they positively control almost all Palestinian traffic entering (or leaving) Israel.

Statistics prove the first two objectives decisively. The last three objectives require some interpolation, but are not a stretch of the imagination. As the numbers show that attacks have decreased, it is apparent to see that the fence has also minimized the transfer of weapons into Israel. Further, the concrete portions of the wall, just as Tirza’s wall in Gilo did, do in fact prevent effective shooting against Israeli population and vital infrastructure targets. Finally, by accomplishing the above stated objectives, the security fence realizes the last of the Ministry of Defense’s stated objectives—law enforcement.

By reading the stated objectives and applying accrued data to a logical analysis, the Israelis have met the literal objectives written for all to read. However, at least as important as the stated objectives of the security fence are the other effects the fence has had upon both sides of the population. It is difficult to narrow down or categorize the effects of the security fence, but one of the most important ramifications of the fence, unwritten in the stated objectives, has to do with the division of the population itself.

What other goals does the fence accomplish?

Beyond the physical security the barrier has provided Israel, a much more important objective has also been realized. What could be more important than protecting Israeli lives? The answer is protecting the continued existence of the Israeli state. Probably the most important separation the barrier made was not the separation between terrorist and target, but instead between Palestinians and Israelis.

As was hinted at earlier, one of the primary objectives of the security fence was to include as many Israelis on the west side of the barrier as possible while, more significantly, isolating as many Palestinians to the east side as they could. By carefully designing the route of the security fence, Israeli planners did just that.

434 kilometers (269 miles) or 61.4% of the barrier was completed as of July 2010, with another 60km (8.4%) under construction. The total planned length of the barrier, after several adjustments, is 707km (439 miles).⁴² The reason this route is more than twice the length of the internationally recognized border is demography. By adjusting the route of the barrier to separate the area based on population, the Israelis were able to keep 48 of 117 settlements on the

west side. This equates to a population of almost 188,000 Israeli citizens.⁴³ More significantly, the routing added only 33,000 Palestinians.⁴⁴

To fully understand the impact of demography, only a basic understanding of two concepts is required: math and democracy. In order for Israel to survive as a democracy, it must follow the majority vote of its citizens. In order for Israel to remain a Jewish state, the Jewish population must run the state. In order for both of these to remain true (Israel remains a democratic Jewish state), Israel must maintain a Jewish majority. By looking at a graph of current growth rates in the area, it is apparent that this will become a problem for Israel in the near future (see figure 10).

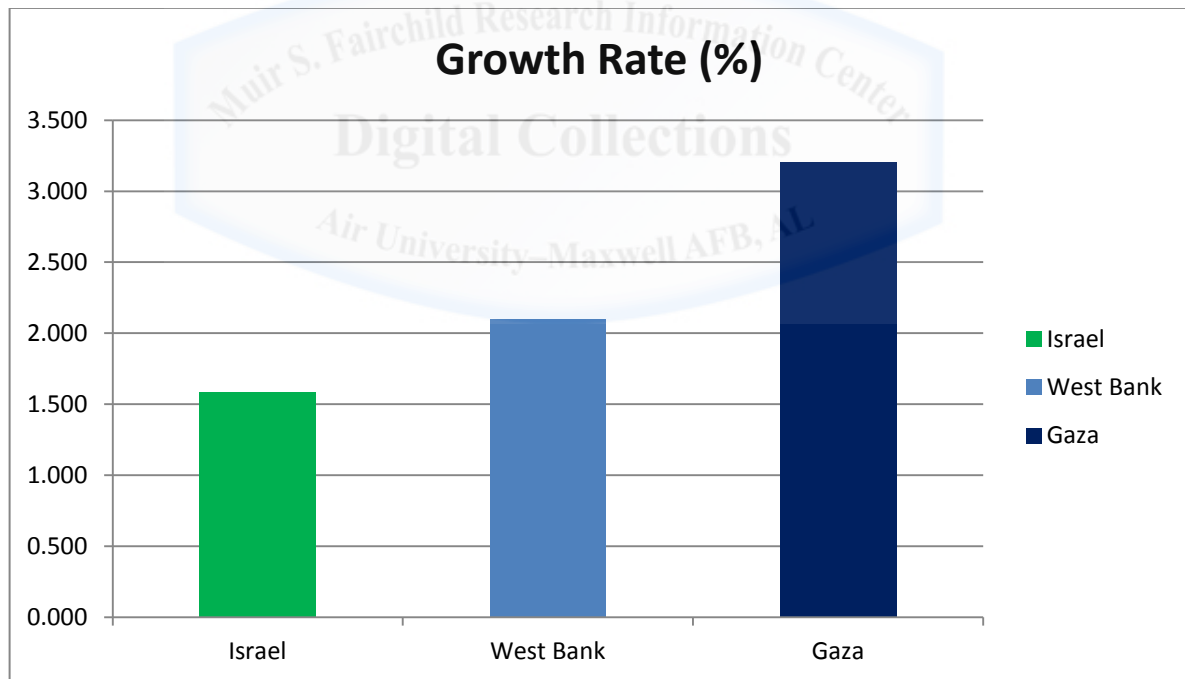


Figure 10. Graph comparing growth rates from the CIA World Factbook of Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza. Source: author.

Using a linear extrapolation using current population and growth rates, if Israel included the entire population of Israel, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, the Jewish majority would end in the year 2020 (see figure 11).

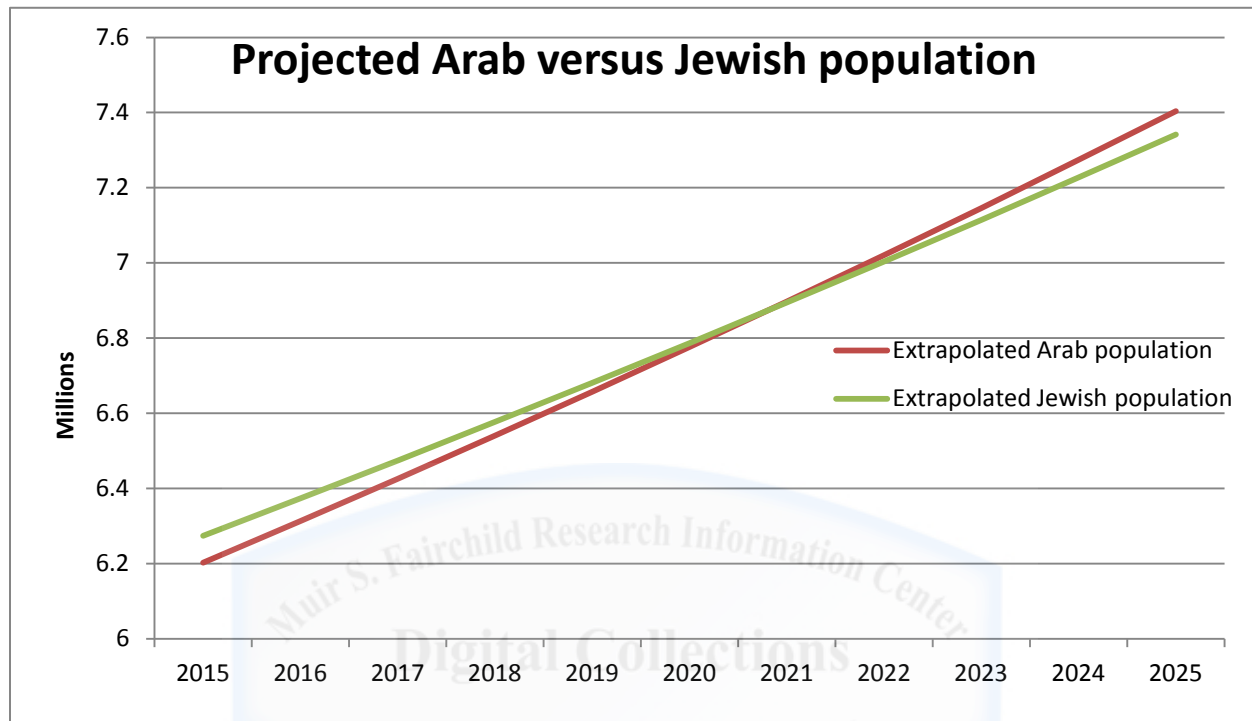


Figure 11. Extrapolation of Arab and Jewish populations west of the Jordan River based on growth rates published in the CIA World Factbook. Source: author.

However, if you exclude the populations of the West Bank and Gaza, Israel retains a Jewish majority for well over the next century—even if you assume the Israeli Arabs growth rate will mirror that of the West Bank. This is the true value of the separation barrier—demographic security.

A second unwritten motive behind the separation barrier is the promotion of voluntary transfer. The concept is simple, and also morally reprehensible. Another way the Israelis can increase their demographic security is by reducing the number of Palestinians in the occupied territories. No one expects the international community to allow the Israelis to forcibly remove

them, but Israel has a solution to this problem. Instead of forcibly removing them, Israel uses their absolute control to make life extremely difficult on the Palestinian population. One of the most effective controls Israel uses to encourage voluntary transfer is movement control.

Along with the separation barrier itself, the roads leading from Israel on the west side of the barrier to the settlements on the east side help to divide the West Bank. Palestinians are not allowed to use these roads without special permits, which are often nearly impossible to get. Thus, by isolating the Palestinians on the east side of the barrier, and then dividing up the West Bank by cutting across it with protected roads the Palestinians can't use or cross, the Israelis make movement within the West Bank extremely difficult for the Palestinians. The more difficult their life, the more probable it becomes that the Palestinians will voluntarily relocate, thus increasing the demographic security of Israel. Though this is not a stated objective of the separation barrier, it does enable this objective quite effectively.

Another unvoiced objective the separation barrier meets is the de-facto promotion of a two-state solution. For all intents and purposes, an actual border now exists between Israel and the West Bank. The longer this separation barrier exists, the more normal the situation becomes. Thus, the very existence of the separation barrier actually increases the viability of a two-state solution—since it practically enforces one unilaterally upon the Palestinians as it is.

When you combine the stated objectives of providing physical security with the implicit objectives of providing demographic security, the separation barrier absolutely meets its objectives. The question becomes, at what cost?

Humanitarian Impact

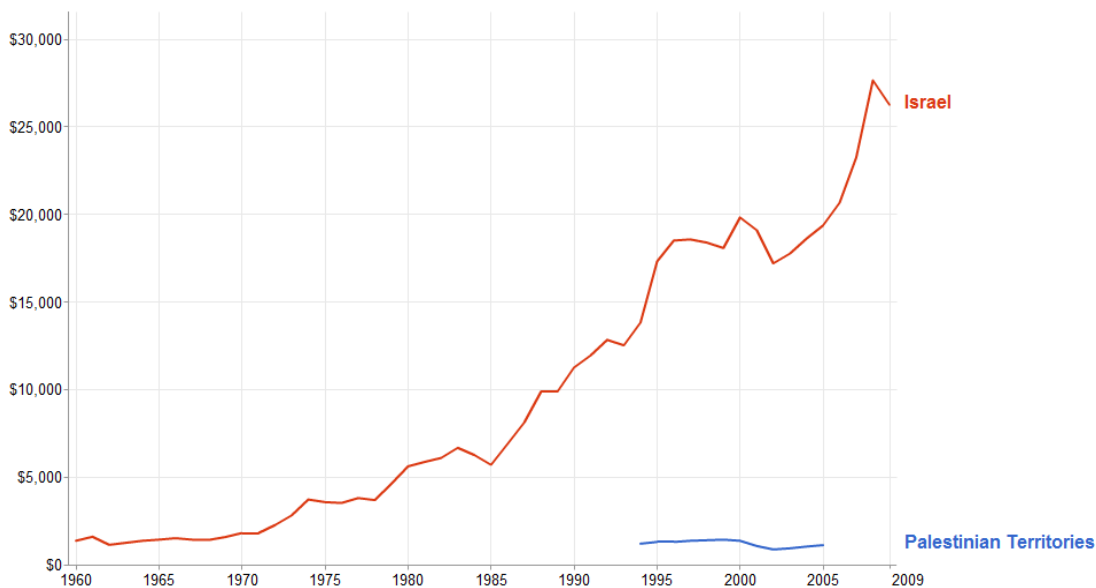
It is difficult to define every impact the security fence has had upon the inhabitants of the West Bank. However, it is easy to read examples of its impact on everyday life. The separation barrier has impacted the society as a whole, but none more so than those that live (or lived) near its route. This impact ranges from economic to emotional and from corporeal to metaphysical. Understanding the depth of the impact the wall has had on the West Bank is crucial to understanding the implications the barrier has on furthering the peace process.

Economically, the barrier has had a severe impact on the Palestinians. Before the barrier, many of the best paying jobs were located on the Israeli side, and Palestinians would often commute every day to and from work in Israel. With the construction of the barrier, a permit was now necessary to get across the “border” to the work on the other side. These permits were not easy to get, and were sometimes cancelled or not renewed for seemingly arbitrary reasons. Without reliable access to Israel, Palestinians soon found themselves unable to hold jobs on the other side of the fence. This separation resulted in a decrease in the gross domestic product throughout the West Bank.

Although the per capita GDP was basically stable in the period before the security fence was erected, it plummeted throughout the West Bank after its realization. According to Rashid Khalidi, the per capita GDP of the average Palestinian citizen rose \$6 in the period between 1995 and 2000, from \$1380 to \$1386. However, after the outbreak of the second intifada and the initial construction of the separation barrier, it decreased to \$1146 by 2004.⁴⁵ This phenomenon becomes almost obscene when you compare the West Bank’s GDP growth with that of Israel in the same period (see figure 12).

GDP per capita at current prices

Gross Domestic Product per capita at current prices. Not adjusted for inflation and converted to US dollars applying market exchange rates. [More info »](#)



Data source: [World Bank, World Development Indicators](#) - Last updated Apr 1, 2011

Figure 12. Graph comparing the GDP growth of Israel and the West Bank, according to World Bank figures.

Total GDP numbers don't tell the whole story, but they paint an overall picture. What they don't tell is the story of the farmer who must ask for permission to access his farmlands, now placed off-limits in the seam zone. They don't fully speak of the workers who can't reach their jobs which used to be a mere walk across the street, but now lay on the other side of a 20 foot tall concrete wall. The economic impact to the West Bank has been extreme, but looking past the numbers it becomes apparent how the barrier has affected the communities in a very personal sense.

Beyond the economic impact, the wall has negatively influenced the school system in the West Bank. Countless stories exist about students cut off from schools, as one example from the UN OCHA's study shows: "Increased obstacles are also hampering the ability of pupils and teachers to reach schools in Jerusalem. In neighbourhoods such as Abu Dis, Al 'Eizariya, and Bir Nabala, which are cut off by the Barrier, the once short journey from home to classroom can take up to two hours each way. The main Al Quds university campus at Abu Dis has lost one

third of its land to the Barrier and is now cut off from the city. About half of the 8,000 students who travel to Abu Dis daily now need to take a circuitous 17 kilometre journey to reach the campus, requiring more than one taxi or bus each way.”⁴⁶ The ramifications of this separation of students, teachers, and schools extend deep into the West Bank, well past the area directly affected by the barrier.

Possibly the most severe physical impact the barrier has caused on Palestinian society has occurred in health care. This impact is most visible within the suburbs of Jerusalem, where the wall has isolated approximately 25% of the Palestinian residents of the city on the east side of the barrier. This has exacerbated the issues listed above (access to work and schools), but has the probably more severe effect of isolating the population from health care. The UN reports that “According to the 2007 UNOCHA-UNRWA survey of 15 closed area localities [areas located between the wall and the Green Line, or in the seam zone] in the northern West Bank, seven communities have no access to local primary health care and only one community has access to 24-hour-emergency services.”⁴⁷ This lack of access to medical facilities has impacted the staffs of the hospitals, as well the patients.

When the barrier gets in the way of the hospital staff, it often results in tardy or completely absent employees. Again, according to the UN, “The number of West Bank staff at East Jerusalem hospitals is decreasing: in 2007, roughly 70% (1,168 out of 1,670) East Jerusalem hospital staff were from the West Bank, but as of March 2009, this had declined to 62.5% (915 out of 1,470) East Jerusalem hospital employees.”⁴⁸ The barrier impacts health care at all levels—access, availability, jobs, and even survival. Citing the UN OCHA, “Seven communities reported medical emergencies occurring as a result of restricted gate openings: there are cases of persons dying because of accidents at night when the checkpoint was closed. In nine

communities, it was reported that expectant mothers leave the closed area weeks before delivery to ensure access to proper care.”⁴⁹

Looking further past the physical, measurable impacts, the separation barrier has also severely emotionally affected the residents of the West Bank. Hazim, 13 years old living in Aida Camp near the Israeli settlement of Gilo says, “I’m not happy with my life now. I feel trapped, like I live in a prison. I am sad now, but what can we do? This is our life.”⁵⁰ Of course this point of view is not isolated to one village or one 13 year old boy. Another villager in the Jenin district of the West Bank, Rasha goes on: “When I saw the Wall being built, I felt sad and dejected. Most people in our village are farmers; my family lost half of our land. We watched our olive trees being chopped down and our land being stolen. We felt isolated and frightened that we would lose communications with people from nearby villages. We have lost friends and family members who can no longer come to see us. Our village has lost more than half of its land. It makes me very pessimistic for the future; I am tired of seeing things disappear and being surrounded inside a prison.”⁵¹ The emotional impact of the wall is intense, and must be counted as a cost of its construction.

This section could easily consume an entire book, as several have already been written on this topic. Without going any further into the individual examples, suffice it to say that the separation barrier has had a tremendous humanitarian impact on the residents of the West Bank. This impact must be weighed when judging the wall’s success or failure as an instrument of peace.

Conclusion

The wall in Palestine is a controversial topic. However, despite the controversy surrounding it, the wall has the ability to actually further the peace process between Israel and the Palestinian people. The separation barrier has essentially established a border upon which to enact a two-state solution and ensures both the physical and demographic security of Israel. However, in doing so, it has placed too great a burden on the Palestinian people. In order to ease this burden and truly act as a foundation for peace instead of an impediment, Israel needs to make some changes.

Why not build the wall along the Green Line? Besides the loss of demographic security, another potent reason exists not to change the route back to the Green Line. Much like Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000, a change in the complete routing of the security fence to the pre '67 borders would likely be interpreted by the Palestinians as a success garnered from continued violent resistance. David Makovsky agrees: "... building the West Bank fence along the Green Line would not necessarily facilitate long-term peace either. Palestinians have long debated whether the best way to obtain Israeli concessions is through compromise or terror. To vindicate the "terrorism pays" school of thought by, in essence, retreating to the Green Line would virtually guarantee that the Palestinians will resort to violence in future disputes with Israel."⁵²

However, simply rerouting the fence in the most controversial areas would not be seen as a success of terrorism, but instead a success of the court system and appeals process. The Israeli Supreme Court has the authority to order a change of routing in the separation barrier, and that power has been used before. Israel should continue this path and give up some of the

demographic security the current routing of the barrier provides by conceding to Palestinian demands and international human rights appeals that some of the routing is simply untenable.

Moving the fence would not be an unprecedented event. Actually, there are several precedents to such an undertaking. In 2000, with the withdrawal from Lebanon, Israel acted quickly to move the fence to the internationally recognized withdrawal line.⁵³ Israel also moved fences along its border with Syria in 1974, Egypt in 1979, and Jordan in 1994.⁵⁴ More recently, small changes have been made after construction of the barrier following court rulings demanding changes. As recently as February of 2010, Israel has begun rerouting the wall near the West Bank village of Bilin in accordance with Israeli Supreme Court rulings.⁵⁵ During the period from April 2009 to March 2010, Israel made further changes near the highly disputed area of Qalqilya. In June 2010, the UN OCHA's Special Focus report titled "West Bank Movement and Access," quotes that ". . . in the Qalqiliya governorate, following another HCJ ruling dating from September 2005, the Israeli authorities completed the rerouting of a section of the Barrier around the settlement of Alfe Menashe. This rerouting, and the subsequent removal of the former Barrier and Barrier checkpoint controlling access to the enclave (the Ras Atiya checkpoint), "released" three communities (pop. 800) from the "Seam Zone." . . . Therefore, despite the expansion of the "Seam Zone" further south, the total number of people living in the closed areas behind the Barrier saw a net decrease of 22 percent, from approximately 10,000 to 7,800."⁵⁶

Rerouting the barrier further would not only increase the legitimacy of Israel in the eyes of their neighbors and the international community at large, but it would also benefit in another extremely important way. Rerouting the barrier to a more acceptable course in the areas most vocally contested would actually provide a much more probable border in the event of a two-

state solution. Although this action would essentially be done unilaterally at first—with no offered or provided Palestinian concessions—it would provide for a much more realistic international border politically acceptable to both parties. In light of the complete absence of progress in the peace process currently, these unilateral actions may be the best hope of bolstering the chance of success of the two-state solution.

Another important consideration of the rerouting of the separation barrier involves the amount of land the West Bank has lost due to its construction. According to the latest data on B'Tselem's website, the area of the West Bank unilaterally annexed due to the construction of the barrier sits at 8.5%. Additionally, another 3.4% is located on the east side of the wall, but is completely or partially surrounded by the wall. Added together, almost 12% of the West Bank is directly affected by the wall.⁵⁷ While rerouting the barrier will help to reduce the current figure, it is unlikely this number will go below 10% while still separating the population according to Israeli desires. Therefore, a "land swap" will be a necessary addition to help resolve the issues the barrier has created.

Exchanging land from what is now on the Israeli side of the Green Line to Palestinian control is the only politically acceptable course of action to defend the construction of the barrier on mostly Palestinian land. Israel must compensate the Palestinians for the loss of their land, and the exchange must be mathematically justifiable. Thus, in addition to rerouting the barrier, Israel must exchange land, equivalent in size to at least 10% of the West Bank, from outside the border of the West Bank to within. Further, the land offered to the West Bank must not be arid, unusable land but instead similar in production value to that of the land annexed during the construction of the barrier.

The construction of the wall in the West Bank was, is, and will remain a controversial topic. However, by rerouting it to open up some of the “enclaves” it creates within the West Bank and offering an equal or greater amount of land to the Palestinians to the north and south of the current West Bank, the wall can actually promote peace via a two-state solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. The wall itself has helped to push the Palestinians to a point that even a politically unappealing solution may seem acceptable in order to better their current economic situation. The unfortunate situation the security fence has helped to force upon the West Bank could actually be the catalyst necessary to fuel movement toward a two-state solution.

The unilateral action taken by the Israelis to build a wall around a people does not have to end in oppression or apartheid. By taking more action unilaterally, Israel has the chance to promote peace and change the facts on the ground into a map that supports the creation of an independent state of Palestine. The creation of a Palestinian state, in the long run, is the best chance Israel has of remaining a democratic Jewish nation, and it has the power and compassion necessary to make progress towards this goal even without the active participation of a viable and legitimate Palestinian government.

Notes

(All notes appear in shortened form. For full details, see the appropriate entry in the bibliography)

- ¹ Stoil and Hadi, "PM: We'll Keep Security Fence in Place," 2009.
- ² Backmann, *A Wall in Palestine*, p. 17.
- ³ Davis, *The Middle East for Dummies*, p. 35-81.
- ⁴ Rossi, *What Every American Should Know About the Rest of the World*, p. 16.
- ⁵ Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, p. 41.
- ⁶ Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, p. 3-9.
- ⁷ Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, p. 512.
- ⁸ Kershner, *Barrier: The Seam of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, p. 4.
- ⁹ Rees et al., "Streets Red with Blood," 2002.
- ¹⁰ Kershner, *Barrier: The Seam of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, p. 4.
- ¹¹ Kershner, *Barrier: The Seam of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, p. 161.
- ¹² Kershner, *Barrier: The Seam of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, p. 161.
- ¹³ Lochery, *The View from the Fence*, p. 18.
- ¹⁴ Backmann, *A Wall in Palestine*, p. 39.
- ¹⁵ Ministry of Defense, *Israel's Security Fence*, 2007.
- ¹⁶ B'Tselem, *Separation Barrier: Statistics*, 2009.
- ¹⁷ Kershner, *Barrier: The Seam of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, p. 4.
- ¹⁸ Backmann, *A Wall in Palestine*, p. 25.
- ¹⁹ Kershner, *Barrier: The Seam of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, p. 4.
- ²⁰ Ministry of Defense, *Israel's Security Fence*, 2007.
- ²¹ Backmann, *A Wall in Palestine*, p. 3.
- ²² B'Tselem, *Separation Barrier: Photo Archive*, 2009
- ²³ Backmann, *A Wall in Palestine*, p. 23.
- ²⁴ Backmann, *A Wall in Palestine*, p. 24.
- ²⁵ Backmann, *A Wall in Palestine*, p. 24.
- ²⁶ Bard, "Israel's Security Fence," 2010.
- ²⁷ Ministry of Defense, *Israel's Security Fence*, 2007.
- ²⁸ Makdisi, *Palestine Inside Out*, p. 16.
- ²⁹ Backmann, *A Wall in Palestine*, p. 47.
- ³⁰ B'Tselem, *Separation Barrier: Statistics*, 2009.
- ³¹ HEPG, "Impact of Separation Barrier, p. 4.
- ³² Ministry of Defense, *Israel's Security Fence*, 2007.
- ³³ Blum, *The Jerusalem Post*, 2004.
- ³⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Suicide Terror Attacks 2000-2007*, 2008.
- ³⁵ Makovsky, "A Defensible Fence," p. 16.
- ³⁶ Makovsky, "A Defensible Fence," p. 17.
- ³⁷ Makovsky, "A Defensible Fence," p. 17.
- ³⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Four Years of Conflict: Israel's war against terrorism*, 2004.

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- ³⁹ Independent Media Review Analysis, “Summary of Israel’s Response regarding the Security Fence,” 2005.
- ⁴⁰ OCHA Special Focus, “Israeli-Palestinian Fatalities Since 2000 - Key Trends,” 2007.
- ⁴¹ B’Tselem, *Statistics: Restrictions on Movement*, 2010.
- ⁴² B’Tselem, *Separation Barrier: Statistics*, 2009.
- ⁴³ B’Tselem, *Separation Barrier: Statistics*, 2009.
- ⁴⁴ OCHA, “West Bank Barrier Route Projections,” 2010.
- ⁴⁵ Khalidi, *The Iron Cage*, p. 203.
- ⁴⁶ OCHA, “A Summary of the Humanitarian Impacts of the Barrier,” p. 13.
- ⁴⁷ OCHA, “A Summary of the Humanitarian Impacts of the Barrier,” p. 17.
- ⁴⁸ OCHA, “A Summary of the Humanitarian Impacts of the Barrier,” p. 13.
- ⁴⁹ OCHA, “A Summary of the Humanitarian Impacts of the Barrier,” p. 16.
- ⁵⁰ Wiles, *Behind the Wall*, p. 34.
- ⁵¹ Wiles, *Behind the Wall*, p. 38.
- ⁵² Makovsky, “A Defensible Fence,” p. 20.
- ⁵³ Makovsky, “A Defensible Fence,” p. 40.
- ⁵⁴ Makovsky, “A Defensible Fence,” p. 40.
- ⁵⁵ Al Jazeera, “Israel Acts on West Bank Wall Order,” 2010.
- ⁵⁶ OCHA, “West Bank Movement and Access,” 2010.
- ⁵⁷ B’Tselem, *Separation Barrier: Statistics*, 2009.

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